

15. A semiconductor ridge laser apparatus, comprising:

5 . a second active ridge section having a second width and capable of supporting the fundamental lateral mode and a first number of higher-order lateral modes; and

wherein the fundamental lateral mode and the one higher-order lateral mode form an output beam having a profile that is less astigmatic than a purely fundamental lateral mode output beam profile.

17. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the one higher-order lateral mode is a second-order mode.

a fourth active ridge section capable of supporting the fundamental mode and a second number of higher-order lateral modes greater than the first number of higher-order lateral modes; and

30 19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein at least one of the third and fifth active ridge sections has a linear taper.